A Comprehensive Tobacco Strategy for Nova Scotia

NOVA SCOTIA
Department of Health

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Executive Summary

Nova Scotia has the highest smoking rate in the country. Tobacco use remains the number one cause of preventable death and disability in Nova Scotia. We need a coordinated and comprehensive provincial tobacco strategy to reduce smoking rates in Nova Scotia and thus reduce the burden of tobacco-related illness.

The Province of Nova Scotia is committed to reducing tobacco use and the health burdens of tobacco use. Through a process of stakeholder consultations, research, and best-practice reviews, we have developed a provincial tobacco strategy that involves a multi-year approach in the areas of pricing and taxation, smoke-free legislation and policy, treatment and cessation, community-based programming, youth smoking prevention, media and public awareness, and monitoring and evaluation.

The strategy will be managed through the Nova Scotia Department of Health.

We need a coordinated and comprehensive provincial tobacco strategy to reduce smoking rates in Nova Scotia and thus reduce the burden of tobacco-related illness.

Acknowledgments

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Addiction Services
Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre
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Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia
Heart Health Nova Scotia
Medical Society of Nova Scotia
Nova Scotia Department of Education
Nova Scotia Department of Finance
Nova Scotia Department of Health
Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission
Provincial Health Council
Public Health Association of Nova Scotia
Public Health Services
Smoke-Free Kings
Smoke-Free Nova Scotia
The Lung Association of Nova Scotia

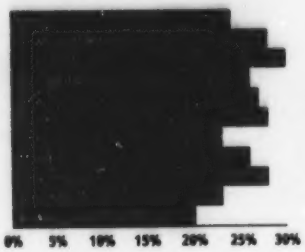
Tobacco Use in Nova Scotia

Smoking Rates – Nova Scotia is Number 1

In May 2001, Health Canada released the results of the 2000 Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS). This survey ranked Nova Scotia number one – the province with the highest smoking rate in Canada. Nova Scotia's smoking rate is currently 30 per cent.

Nova Scotia's youth smoking rate for the population aged 15–19 is 25 per cent. Rates of smoking during pregnancy also are high at 25 per cent.

Current smokers aged 15 and over, by province
Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (Feb-Dec), 2000.



Current smokers aged 15-19, by province
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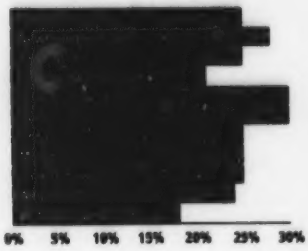


Costs of Tobacco Use

The high rates of smoking in Nova Scotia translate into high rates of chronic disease. Tobacco use remains Nova Scotia's number one cause of preventable illness and death – 1,650 Nova Scotians die each year in our province due to smoking-related illnesses.[1] Two hundred Nova Scotians die every year from exposure to environmental or second-hand smoke.[2]

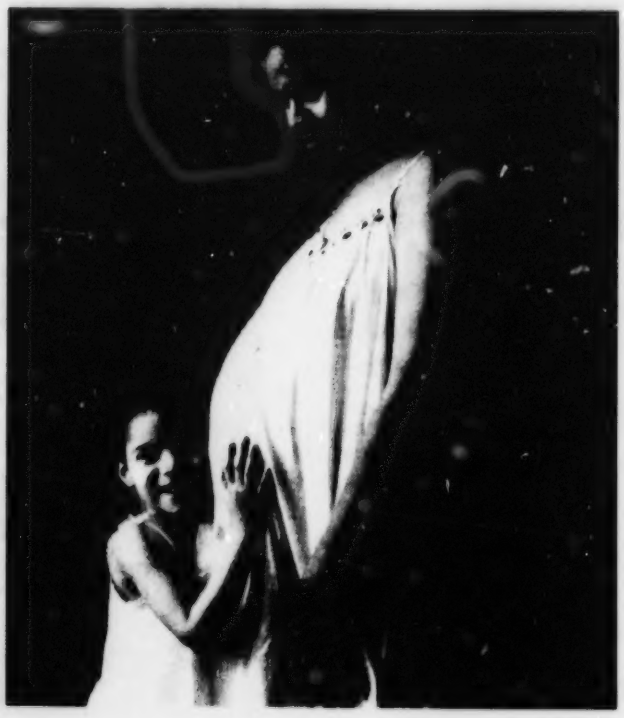
Tobacco use has not only a devastating impact on the health of Nova Scotians, but also significant implications for the health care system. The estimated costs to treat smoking-related illnesses in Nova Scotia is $170 million, which is substantially more than the revenue generated through tobacco taxes.[3]

Building a Tobacco Strategy That Works

Throughout 2000–01, the Nova Scotia Department of Health coordinated stakeholder consultations and conducted research and best-practice reviews to identify elements of a comprehensive tobacco strategy for Nova Scotia. Through these efforts we developed a provincial tobacco strategy built around the following themes: comprehensiveness, adequate and sustainable funding, long-term commitment, and collaboration.

The goal of Nova Scotia's comprehensive tobacco strategy is to reduce disease, disability, and death caused by tobacco use by preventing youth initiation of tobacco use, supporting cessation among youth and adults, and eliminating exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke.

No one organization can assume responsibility for reducing the burden of tobacco use in this province. An effective tobacco strategy requires the input and involvement of many stakeholders including the Province of Nova Scotia, non-governmental organizations, health charities, community organizations and coalitions, and professional associations. The government of Nova Scotia, through the Department of Health, will work in partnership with key stakeholders to implement the provincial tobacco strategy.



To be effective a provincial tobacco strategy must be comprehensive and must simultaneously address a range of program elements. Research and best practices from other jurisdictions have highlighted elements critical to the success of tobacco control efforts. Nova Scotia's strategy has been defined around these elements.

Tobacco use is a serious issue in Nova Scotia and reductions in tobacco use will not happen overnight.

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Nova Scotia Tobacco Strategy

The Province of Nova Scotia is committed to tobacco reduction in Nova Scotia. The tobacco strategy will be managed through the Department of Health. The strategy is comprehensive and long-term and addresses the following key elements:

- Pricing and Taxation
- Smoke-free Legislation and Policy
- Treatment and Cessation
- Community-based Programming
- Youth Smoking Prevention
- Media and Public Awareness
- Monitoring and Evaluation

Pricing and Taxation

Research indicates that increasing the price of cigarettes is both a cessation and youth prevention strategy, as price increases encourage smokers to quit smoking and prevent youth initiation. The report *The Cost of Tobacco Use in Nova Scotia* concluded that raising tobacco taxes is the most cost-effective intervention that governments can make – a $10 increase in the price of a carton of cigarettes in Nova Scotia would decrease cigarette consumption by 10 per cent in the general population and decrease youth consumption by 17.5 per cent.

In April 2001, the federal and provincial governments announced a federal-provincial tax increase of $4.00 per carton of cigarettes.

Smoke-free Legislation and Policy

Legislation that ensures smoke-free public places and work places is a key element of a comprehensive tobacco strategy because it protects non-smokers from the known harmful effects of exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke and plays a role in the prevention and cessation of tobacco use. Smoke-free policy has been shown to have a protective effect on teenage smoking and supports smokers in their cessation attempts.

Second-hand smoke kills an estimated 200 Nova Scotians each year through heart disease, lung cancer, and other cancers. It also causes more than 1,000 respiratory tract infections (pneumonia, bronchitis) and worsens asthma for up to 4,000 children.[4] Nova Scotia currently lags behind much of the country in terms of the level of protection provided against second-hand smoke. In 1995 only 27 per cent of Nova Scotians were protected by legislation restricting smoking in indoor environments.[5]

Those individuals most at risk from second-hand smoke are infants and children of smokers, spouses of smokers, and employees exposed to second-hand smoke at work, in particular restaurant, bar, and casino workers.

Initiatives to protect individuals from exposure to second-hand smoke will involve

- education on the known health effects of second-hand smoke
- support and encouragement to parents to reduce or eliminate children's exposure to second-hand smoke in the home
- passage of province-wide smoke-free workplace legislation

Treatment and Cessation

Much of the reduction in tobacco use in Canada over the past 25 years has been due to the numbers of smokers who have quit. If Nova Scotia is to realize a reduction in smoking rates among adults and youth, then effective cessation supports have to be in place.

Nova Scotia's Tobacco Strategy recognizes the need for a range of cessation programs and supports. To this end we will launch a provincial cessation program consisting of the following components:

- provide treatment and cessation information via the government website and its links to other effective treatment and cessation sites
- develop and implement a 1-800 treatment and cessation counseling service
- dedicate Addictions Services staff within DHAs to provide and evaluate a range of nicotine treatment services
- support and train health care providers in providing minimal interventions
- develop an ongoing media and communication strategy to motivate and support people to stop smoking or to reduce tobacco use

Community-based Programming

An effective tobacco strategy requires action at the provincial, district, and community level. We will do the following to support communities in addressing local tobacco control needs:

- coordinate a provincial skill development and motivational conference (October, 2001) in partnership with key stakeholder groups
- hire district tobacco coordinators to support community-based tobacco initiatives
- support Nova Scotia's ethnically diverse communities in addressing their tobacco control issues by
  - reviewing existing data on smoking behaviours by ethnicity and identifying both issues specific to Nova Scotia and gaps in information
  - identifying partners from existing ethnocultural networks and organizations that we can work with to address smoking issues
- provide ongoing technical assistance to community organizations and community tobacco coordinators.

Youth Smoking Prevention

We recognize that reducing youth smoking in this province will require action in all of the areas identified in the provincial tobacco strategy. In addition to our general efforts, we will undertake the following youth-specific initiatives:

- continue to support the Provincial Youth Tobacco Advisory Committee
- develop a school smoking prevention program consisting of
  - smoking prevention curriculum (grades p-12)
  - guidelines for effective school tobacco policy
  - youth cessation support
- develop a youth site as part of the government website on tobacco control
- continue the enforcement program concerning the ban on sale of tobacco to minors under the NS Tobacco Access Act. This will include developing a public education and awareness campaign to educate the public about the law and to increase compliance.

Media and Public Awareness

We will launch a planned media and public awareness campaign to support the provincial tobacco strategy. The campaign will

- generate momentum for the overall strategy by engaging the interest among consumers, tobacco control partners, and other key stakeholders
- raise awareness of the harmful effects of smoking and second hand smoke
- reduce complacency towards smoking and acceptance of smoking by beginning to shift attitudes

Nova Scotia's provincial media and public awareness campaign will include

- television and print ads
- promotional resources
- enhancements to the website

Monitoring and Evaluation

We will use monitoring and ongoing evaluation to gauge progress and to generate recommendations for improvements and revisions to the provincial tobacco strategy. We will use the following approach to ensure objective and reliable evaluation of the provincial tobacco strategy:

- establish a provincial monitoring and evaluation group to develop an evaluation strategy and long-term targets
- conduct an independent annual evaluation of the provincial Tobacco Strategy and produce annual reports
- revise the strategy whenever needed based on evaluation results

1 Colman, R. 2000. The Cost of Tobacco in Nova Scotia.
2 Colman, R. 2001. The Impact of Smoke-Free Workplaces.
3 World Bank. 1999. Governments and the Economics of Tobacco Control.
4 Colman, R. 2001. The Impact of Smoke-Free Workplaces.
5 Federal, Provincial and Territorial Advisory Committee on Population Health. 1999. Statistical Report on the Health of Canadians.

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